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- 13 For example, see Bob Arnot, 'Soviet labour productivity and the failure of the Shchekino experiment', *Critique* 15, 1981, pp. 31–56.
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# THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF YEMEN: THE 'CUBAN PATH' IN ARABIA

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The experience of the PDRY, independent since the British departure in 1967, is of interest for the study of the transition to socialism in a number of respects.<sup>1</sup> First, it represents by far the most radical experience of social and political transformation yet seen in the Arab world and, with the exception of the Islamic republics of Soviet Central Asia, the most far reaching yet seen in the Muslim world. The South Yemen revolution has therefore taken place in a context noted for particularly strong hostility to socialism at the mass level because of Islam, and in a part of the world where regional powers hostile to socialism, the oil states, exert considerable influence. Nevertheless, the record of the PDRY, despite the immense difficulties it has faced, stands in clear contrast to that of other Arab states which profess adherence to socialism: (a) it is the only such state where the transformation process has led to the outright expropriation of the indigenous landowners and bourgeoisie, i.e. has gone beyond nationalist revolution and social reforms to an attempt at socialist revolution; (b) as opposed to transferring ownership from an old to a new possessing class it has gone much further than any of these other states in socialising the means of production and installing a centrally-planned economic system; (c) whilst seeing itself as part of the Arab revolution, it has rejected any ideological compromise with the theories of a special Arab or Islamic socialism of the kind espoused by Nasserites, Qaddafi, the Ba'ath or the Algerian NLF; (d) unlike all these other régimes, the top state officials are not drawn from the army, and the Party is an independent force that itself controls the state apparatus; (e) it has militantly rejected compromise with the reactionary forces

in the Arab world, and has taken up firm and (to it) costly internationalist positions in contrast to the equivocations of the other supposedly 'socialist' Arab countries.

Yet the revolution in South Yemen was not made by a communist or Marxist Party, and herein lies the second reason for interest in the PDRY: as an instance of the 'Cuban model', i.e. of radical nationalist experiences which, for a combination of internal and external factors, have gone beyond their initial political confines to attempt a full transition to socialism. Hence, while the South Yemeni process was not begun by a communist or even clearly socialist organisation, it illustrates the possibility of beginning a socialist transition, of vaulting from one path of development to another. This is the path already taken by Cuba, and one that may also be taken by certain Third World states in which a socially *radical* nationalism has triumphed – Angola, Mozambique and Nicaragua being cases in point. However, the conditions for such a successful transition are demanding and are not as yet fully satisfied in the South Yemeni case. Herein lies the third reason for studying the example of the PDRY in some detail; while the poverty of the mass of the population and the relatively weak implantation of a capitalist ruling class made the revolution of 1967 all the more possible, this restricted availability of material and human resources, and the relative superficiality of the revolutionary process itself, have acted as objective impediments to a transition to socialism. While much analysis of Third World revolutions has stressed the element of will, the South Yemeni case is a harsh reminder of the *objective*, material and cultural, preconditions for any full transition and of the difficulties involved in a voluntaristic approach to revolutionary transformation. Its economic base is too weak to allow for rapid and substantial growth. It is unable to conceive of an autarkic or 'de-coupled' economic growth. At the beginning, the revolutionary movement itself was lacking in trained personnel, riven by factional disputes, deluded by apparent developmental short-cuts, and ideologically isolated from the mass of the population. The political preconditions for a fully democratic system have *not* been present, any more than have the conditions for rapid economic growth. Moreover, the international context in which the South Yemeni re-

volution found itself has been distinctly unfavourable: in its first years it was surrounded by hostile states, deprived of its traditional sources of foreign income, at the moment of revolutionary triumph, and subjected to the consumerist attractions of the oil states. While certain external conditions have allowed the South Yemeni state to survive and in some degree consolidate, others have harassed and undermined it at both the economic and political levels. Hence if socialist revolution is an attempt to expand and consolidate the realm of freedom, the case of the PDRY has underlined that such revolutions take place overwhelmingly in the realm of necessity.

The discussion that follows is an attempt to outline the main characteristics of the South Yemeni experience. It begins by describing the colonial society, the course of the revolution, and the factors behind its particular outcome. It then goes on to analyse changes in the economic, social and political spheres. There follows a description of the international context of the post-revolutionary régime, while the final section suggests certain conclusions of more general relevance which may be drawn from the South Yemeni case.

## **The Revolutionary Experience**

The revolutionary movement in South Yemen owes its radical outcome to the fact that it was directed simultaneously against three separate opponents: British colonialism, the indigenous ruling classes allied to British colonialism, and the state which sought to control the resistance movement in South Yemen, Nasserite Egypt. The radical nature of the movement, its break both with the local ruling classes and with hitherto dominant forms of Arab nationalism, has to be seen in the context of both the social and political conjunctures of South Yemen in the immediate pre-independence period.

Under colonialism the area now comprising South Yemen was composed of two politically distinct kinds of entity. The port of Aden was ruled as a Colony by Britain from the time of its occupation in 1839. It was not just the political, but also the economic focus of colonial rule. With the opening

of the Suez Canal in 1869 it became an important link on the route to India and developed as an entrepôt and garrison city. In 1954 it acquired an oil refinery, and in the 1960s became the headquarters of British forces in the Middle East. Its population rose from 80,000 in 1945 to around 250,000 in 1967. In 1965 80,000 people were registered as being in employment.<sup>2</sup> Over a third of those who migrated to the growing town were from North Yemen, a separate state ruled by a conservative monarch, the Imam, and from the mid-1950s onwards, Aden became the centre of a strong trade union organisation, based in the port and service sectors. This Aden Trades Union Congress was Nasserist and so pro-Egyptian. Economic development in Aden was, however, limited to the international functions performed by the port: there was little industrialisation apart from the refinery, and artisanal activities, and the surplus generated by the port was either placed on deposit in the banks, or exported for investment elsewhere. The ruling class in Aden was dominated by merchant capital – Adeni, Indian and British – and supported by the upper ranks of the civil service.

The rest of the country was ruled under a quite different dispensation. Known as 'South Arabia', this covered nearly two dozen sultanates and other forms of local state over whom the British gradually extended the Protectorate system. In essence, this system meant that the rulers retained responsibility for running their internal affairs; they were guaranteed support by the colonial authorities in Aden, in return for their ensuring that no outside powers gained access in their domains. It was an arrangement comparable to the princely states of India. In social and economic terms, this meant that the hinterland states were not directly incorporated into the colonial-political or capitalist-economic systems of Aden. Muslim, not colonial, law applied here, and the colonial authorities did not seek to extend capitalist relations into the hinterland: the market was too small to merit serious attempts to promote access for goods, and virtually none of the port's surplus was transferred there; even the food imports for the expanding population of Aden were, in the main, drawn from other areas of British control – meat from Somalia, vegetables from Cyprus.<sup>3</sup> The British authorities preferred to draw the city's labour force from another

state, viz. North Yemen, rather than from the Protectorates; such labour was easier to control politically, and this policy avoided any disruption of the social peace upon which the hinterland rested. For their part, the Sultans did not wish to see their local powers attenuated by greater political or economic integration with the port.

Information on the socio-economic system of the hinterland is scarce. It is not sufficient to establish either the full picture of pre-capitalist relations, or the degree to which these relations were being transformed by the introduction of capitalist ones. The ruling class was composed of Sultans and sheikhs, whose power rested both on the ownership of land and on their hereditary positions in a tribal hierarchy. Such non-labourers were flanked by the *sada* (singular *sayyid*), notables who claimed descent from Mohammed, and who performed religious and juridicial functions, as well as often having access to part of the surplus from the land.<sup>4</sup> Except in a few cases, there was no large-scale landownership. The surplus was meagre, and only in two cases was there substantial economic development: these involved cotton projects initiated by the British government in collaboration with sultans who were given a stake in the enterprises. Of the total of around 300,000 acres cultivated in the best years (a mere 0.5 per cent of the land area) only 50,000 acres were cultivated for cotton on irrigated land employing local labour. Yet cotton made up 56 per cent of the Protectorate's exports. The rest of the cultivated area was farmed by peasants who paid a percentage of their crop to the sheikh, sultan or sayyid, or who were engaged in livestock rearing that was similarly taxed. Available evidence suggests that the rural labour force was poor and exploited, but that absolute landlessness was comparatively rare. Only a small percentage of the population—15 per cent at most—were tribal nomads. But the settled rural population was also organised on tribal lines.

The divisions between town and country, Colony and Protectorate, capitalist and pre-capitalist sectors were substantial. It would seem that monetary relations had begun in some measure to permeate the countryside, as workers who had been in the city, or who had worked abroad, remitted part of their income. In the eastern part of South Yemen, known as the Hadramaut, large sectors of the economy

rested upon remittances from exiles in south-east Asia. Yet the pre-existing system of social and political power remained apparently unchallenged until the 1960s, strengthened as it was by the guarantee of British power. There were tribal revolts in the hinterland during the 1950s, but these followed traditional forms of resistance, and involved neither new ideas nor new forms of social and political organisation. They were an extension of tribal warfare, and were often encouraged by the Imam of (North) Yemen, from across the border, for dynastic reasons.

The transformation of the situation in the western part of the hinterland came about by the effect of political developments upon the social changes that were already in train. The guerrillas were based here. One such development was the attempt by the British to forge a new state uniting the sultans of the hinterland with each other, and with the capitalist port. Initiated in 1959, this project led to the creation of a Federation of South Arabia in 1963. This was resented by the urban trades union movement, which did not want to be dominated by the hinterland tribal rulers, yet at the same time it created a more cohesive political context within which an opposition movement could develop. The other political event was the revolution in North Yemen: the Imam died on 18 September 1962, his son was overthrown by Nasserite army officers a week later, and a protracted civil war then began, pitting the nationalist republicans, aided by Egyptian forces, against the royalists, led by the ousted Imam and an array of tribal leaders. The civil war in the North had profound effects on the South and it pioneered two forms of nationalism: it aroused Arab nationalist sentiment in support of Egypt's role, and at the same time mobilised a particular sense of Yemeni nationalism, directed against British rule in the South and towards a new sense of a common Yemeni identity.<sup>6</sup> The political context was shaped by these two integrated processes: on the one hand, the British desire to forge a new state as a preliminary step towards decolonisation, which tied the opposition to colonial rule into a struggle against local ruling classes; on the other a mobilisation of patriotic sentiment in support of the republic in the North. Once the British and their sultan allies in the South were seen to be aiding the royalists against Egypt and the republic in the North, then the two

struggles were presented as being to some degree unified. With ideological and material support from the Egyptians in North Yemen, guerrilla struggle against the British and their allies in South Yemen began in 1963. From 1965 onwards it spread to Aden itself.<sup>7</sup>

Yet the division of South Yemen that had been created by colonialism reproduced itself within the opposition movement. This was divided into two rival factions. The Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen was based in Aden itself, and led by former leaders of the trades union movement, and its following was based on immigrants from North Yemen. The National Liberation Front was led by Nasserite militants who had been politicised in Aden, and were members of a Nasserite pan-Arab movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN); but they were based in the hinterland and mobilised support in their own tribal areas. These were hinterland migrants who had been educated in Aden or had worked there. By 1966, when it was obvious that the British would soon leave, the struggle was taking place on two fronts: first, against the colonial army and the ruling classes of Aden and the hinterland who were trying to consolidate their position for the independence period; second, between the two fronts, FLOSY and NLF, who were competing for mass support and for the monopoly of power in the new state. By mid-1967, the NLF had been able to prevail over FLOSY, even in areas where the latter had previously been dominant. Several of the Aden trades unions swung behind the NLF, and the federal army, recruited from hinterland tribes, was successfully infiltrated by the NLF.

This conflict between FLOSY and NLF was compounded by an additional factor—the shift in Egypt's position. Although it had initially backed the NLF, this support was gradually withdrawn in 1965. The NLF came to see Egypt as a state that would not support its struggle to the end. It accused Nasser of making concessions to the British, the Saudis, and the sultans of the South. The NLF leaders were therefore able to pose as more militant Yemeni nationalists than FLOSY. This particularly Yemeni conflict took place against a wider context in which significant sections of the Arab Nationalist Movement were becoming critical of Nasserism.<sup>8</sup> This radicalisation of the MAN occasioned a



critique of Egypt as a petty bourgeois state, one that was prevented by its class character from giving full support to the revolutionary movement in the Arab world. Egypt's equivocations in Yemen were one cause of this crisis. Its inability to confront Israel, epitomised in the defeat of June 1967, was the other. The result was that the NLF, which emerged victorious in the conflict with FLOSY and which defeated the plan for a Federation of South Arabia based on merchants and sultans, saw itself as part of a new self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist vanguard in the Arab world.

The NLF's radicalisation reflected its formation at three separate levels: the *class* base of the guerrilla movement, i.e. the small peasants who fought the landowners and tribal authorities in the hinterland, in a struggle that was both anti-colonial and socially revolutionary; the *organisational* trajectory of a grouping that had to turn to new models of political and social organisation because of its conflict with what had, till then, been seen as the leading state in the Arab nationalist camp; and the *ideological* transformation of a group that was, in both its Nasserite and Marxist-Leninist phases, under the strong intellectual influence of the left-wing Arab intelligentsia of Lebanon and the Palestinian movement.

## **Post-revolutionary Transformation:**

British rule in South Yemen ended on 30 November 1967, and power was transferred to an NLF government. Although the British authorities had, until the summer, hoped to hand over either to the federal rulers, or to some coalition of federal and FLOSY leaders, the strength of the NLF, in both the hinterland and the city, made this impossible. The NLF did not force the British to leave South Yemen: the decision to withdraw from Aden had been taken by the colonial authorities for other strategic and economic reasons. The NLF did succeed in undermining Britain's plan for transferring power to a pro-western state that would be accommodating to British and to western interests in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean regions as a whole. Yet despite their success in the guerrilla war, the NLF came to

power with many problems. Their own organisation was relatively small—at most a few thousand fighters—and lacked any experienced administrative personnel: as seen elsewhere, the qualities of leadership in guerrilla struggle are not necessarily those required for wielding state power. Not a single one of the NLF leaders had had higher education, or had spent a significant period abroad. The NLF was riven by factionalism—on ideological, political and, persistently, tribal bases; this was to continue long into the post-revolutionary period. The revolutionary period itself had been comparatively short—four years: it had not given the NLF experience in administering liberated areas, and its ties with the urban and rural population were often weak. Significant sections of the urban population sympathised with FLOSY. Above all, the NLF leaders had only a vague idea of what state power involved: beyond the struggle against foreign domination, they seemed to have little sense of what was involved in economic, social and political development. They placed rather too much trust in the Marxist-Leninist formulae which they had espoused in the last stages of the struggle when this meant no more than a radical critique of Nasserism.

Their objective economic context was hardly more favourable. The urban economy had had three main sources of income—the port, a British subsidy which made up 60 per cent of the state's budget, and the income from the British garrison. All three were discontinued in 1967, the latter two as a result of the British withdrawal, the first because of the closure of the Suez Canal in the Arab-Israeli war.

The closing of the Suez Canal cut the number of ships passing through yearly from 6000 to 1500; GNP fell by an estimated 15 per cent per annum in the first two post-independence years; the British subsidy was ended abruptly. This economic crisis, compounded by political resistance to the new régime, provoked a massive flight: up to 500,000 people, out of a total population of under 2 million, left the country. Even though many of these were migrants to South Yemen from other states (North Yemen and Somalia), the outflow disproportionately lessened the number of skilled personnel available to the new government. Virtually all the Adeni merchants and upper civil servants departed, but the

crisis removed many urban workers as well. As a result, although for the first few years after 1967 unemployment remained, the country later had a labour shortage for skilled labour.

The NLF faced multiple tasks: to create a new national economy out of the divided service and subsistence sectors; to overcome the division of the countryside into twenty-three separate sultanates; to develop meagre agricultural resources with the goal of self-sufficiency in food; to train administrative cadres and a new workforce to replace those who had left, and to perform tasks never attempted under the colonial régime; to raise the educational level of a country with adult literacy under 20 per cent; to finance a development budget when the coffers were empty, and when the country was required to spend considerable amounts on military defence.

It took time for a new economic machinery to come into operation. In 1968–9 all salaries, in public and private employment, were cut from a third to two-thirds; public sector salaries were cut again in 1972. At the end of 1969, all banks and insurance companies were nationalised. In 1970, an agricultural reform law limited irrigated holdings to 20 acres and unirrigated holdings to 40 acres. In 1971, the free port status of Aden was abolished, except for a small transit enclave. In 1972, a housing law ended all private renting, and allowed individuals to own only the house in which they lived. The expropriated housing units were then reallocated.

The key to the new economic system has been the gradual imposition of a centralised planning system. The first plan, from 1971 to 1974, was allotted only YD 40 million (about \$96 million at 1971 rates). A quarter was to be spent on agriculture and another quarter on industry, but even this small target was not obtained. As a result of the failure of some of the foreign donors to honour their commitments, the plan was only 77 per cent fulfilled. The second plan covered the five years from 1974 to 1978, with an initial commitment of YD 80 million: of this 27.7 million was to go to agriculture, twice as much as to industry. The monetary figures rose considerably above the original targets reflecting both inflation in world prices and increased foreign aid commitments. By the end of 1977, YD 136 million had

already been spent. Total investment at the end of the 1974-8 plan was nearly YD 200 millions.

State control now pervades all sectors of the economy, except the retail sector where private interests remain active. By mid-1975, land reform had distributed land to about 30,000 individual farmers, nearly all of these now grouped into co-operatives which rely on state funds and machinery with targets set by state officials. By 1980 there were forty-four such co-operatives covering a total area of 214,000 acres, or 70 per cent of the cultivated land, and with a total membership of 40,000 families. Most of these remain service co-operatives, but an increasing number have become production co-operatives, with no distinction of individual peasant plots. State farms, where the peasants receive a wage, were established on land reclaimed from the desert, and by 1978 there were thirty-five of these, covering a total area of around 30,000 acres. In both cases the produce is marketed through a state distribution system: together these account for 80 per cent of agricultural output.

An area of priority expansion has been fishing, controlled by the Ministry of Fish Wealth. Between 1969 and 1975 fish output rose by 38 per cent, and export earnings rose from \$1.3 million in 1969 to \$8.1 million in 1975, when fish had overtaken cotton as the main export. South Yemen borders some of the richest fishing waters in the world, and some officials believe that they can increase fish output by up to 300 per cent. This is important not only for future exports, but also as a source of protein for the Yemeni population. A system of cold stores is being built throughout the country to distribute fish inland where it previously never reached, and fish canning and fishmeal plants are being built for export. The main emphasis is on high value exports—cuttlefish, squids, lobsters—to the Far East and the USA. Two foreign firms (one Japanese, one Russian) are operating under concessions in the fish industry.

The first five-year plan projected a substantial increase in industrial output. Production rose around 260 per cent between Independence and the end of 1975. Of the thirty-five factories in the country at the end of 1977, fourteen belonged entirely to the public sector, eight to the mixed sector (with the state having a 51 per cent share) and thirteen to the private

sector, with the state-owned units accounting for a disproportionate share of workers and output. The state sector alone accounted for about 60 per cent of industrial output by 1980. The Chinese-built textile factory in the Aden suburb of Mansura is the largest: it employs 1400 workers, 60 per cent of them women, and has an annual output of 7 million meters, making the PDRY self-sufficient in some textiles. Other new factories include a shoe factory, a cigarette and match factory and other clothing and mechanical plants, all in the small-scale import substitution area. Total employment in industry in 1977 was over 16,000.<sup>9</sup> 1700 were in the refinery, and about another 7600 people worked in units employing ten persons or more. A substantial number – 6000 – still worked in small non-factory units of four persons or less.

Until 1980, the refinery continued to run at a substantial deficit. It was taken over by mutual agreement in May 1977 and BP runs it on a service contract. Capacity is 8.5 million tons, and its breakeven is around 4 million tons, but throughput was under 1.5 million tons and the deficit was over \$10 million/year. Arab states were reluctant to provide oil: the Saudis cut off their commitment in late 1977 to protest the PDRY's foreign policy, and the Iraqi offer of considerable quantities was on condition that they could station troops at the refinery. The plant is also in great need of modernisation but the funds were not available. The international bunkering traffic is no longer there, and new refineries elsewhere in the Red Sea (particularly the *Petromin* plant at Jeddah) offer cheaper prices. The refinery did, however, get a temporary new lease of life in 1980 as a result of the Iran–Iraq War. Ironically, the plant had been built in the first place to replace BP's refinery in Iran, which Mosadeq nationalised in 1951. In 1980 the destruction of refining capacity at Abadan, and Iraq's problems in oil output, led to greatly increased use of the refinery's capacity by these states.

The port, once the centre of the South Yemeni economy, was partially modernised under a \$16.8 million loan from the Arab Fund for Development in 1975, and its activities have picked up somewhat since the post-1967 slump. The number of ships calling went up from 110 a month to 150 a month after the Suez Canal reopened in 1975, but this was still only

a third of the pre-1967 level; the lucrative passenger-ship market has, in any case, been replaced by air travel. A third of the goods landed are in transit to North Yemen: the brightly-painted trucks of the Taiz and Sanaa merchants can be seen clustered outside the dock gates every morning. This transit trade is conditional on political accord between the two countries, and since 1982 the North has been utilising new competitive facilities at Mocha and Hodeida. There have also been long delays in unloading goods at Aden port, reflecting a shortage of management personnel.

All banking is now controlled by the single National Bank of Yemen, and although individual traders still dominate retail trade, they are directed in a number of ways by state policy. First, 95 per cent of all imports are now brought in by the state; the private traders purchase from state trading bodies who set the retail price. Second, the state has intervened directly to set prices of basic foodstuffs, a move necessitated by world inflation and substantial shortages of some commodities in the mid-1970s. In 1977 in Aden market, fish cost 150 fils a kilo (about 44¢ a pound); bananas and melon cost 50 fils a kilo (about 15¢ a pound). This price system was also enforced at the national level – something quite new in South Yemen with its enormous regional variations in price. Third, a system of state retail shops has been established: at the end of 1977 there were thirty-six in Aden, many selling clothing. The availability of goods in these shops limited the ability of private traders to raise prices. In order to cushion the economy from the effects of inflation, the Ministry of Trade set up a special fund to bridge the gap between Yemeni and world prices and at the worst period, in 1975, a number of commodities was rationed. Although officials said at the end of 1977 only sugar was rationed, shortages of basic foodstuffs from one day to the other certainly occurred, at least in Aden.

The overall record of the South Yemeni economy has marked several substantial advances. The disastrous trends of the first years of independence have been overcome and the dependence on services and a fickle international trade have been broken. A national economy has been established – something 129 years of British occupation failed to do. A system of state control, through the planning and other economic ministries, has been created. Between 1970 and 1975,

GDP rose by about 25 per cent, and the World Bank estimates that in 1973–7 the South Yemeni GDP was growing at around 7 per cent per annum.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, South Yemen faces enormous economic difficulties which over a decade and a half of transformation have only partly solved. First, it lacks any major source of foreign exchange. As a result, the country's balance of payments has remained in serious deficit. In 1975 exports, at around \$15 million, equalled only 8 per cent of imports at \$177 million. This deficit has been made up from two sources. First, emigrant workers remit over \$200 million annually, and the state has encouraged this by giving them special rates of deposit three times higher than the domestic rate. Second, there has been an increase in international aid, which at the end of 1975 came to \$314 million. China was the largest donor, followed by the USSR, Libya, Kuwait, the World Bank and Abu Dhabi. Saudi Arabia also provided up to \$50 million in 1976, and the PDRY emphasises that it is willing to allow foreign investments by private firms under certain conditions. In 1976 foreign debt equalled \$226 million, or 49 per cent of GNP. Foreign loans are scheduled to make up over half of the investment funds for the 1979–83 plan.

One possible solution would be the discovery of oil. As of 1980, no such breakthrough had occurred, and the PDRY imported 500,000 tons of oil a year: because of the Arab boycott against what was seen as too radical a régime, the PDRY acquired most of its oil from the USSR. In 1980, however, there were reports that the Italian firm Agip had discovered oil in commercial quantities off the eastern coast, and that there was a possibility that the PDRY could even begin exporting oil by 1983. If true, these would represent a significant breakthrough in the economic climate of the post-revolutionary period.<sup>11</sup>

There are, however, other major problems internal to the economy. There is a great shortage of skilled labour, and in order to prevent loss of skilled workers to the oil states, where wages are much higher, the government banned further emigration for some years after 1974. The agricultural base remains meagre: although output rose 25 per cent in the 1967–77 period, this barely kept pace with the increase in population: mid-1970s per capita food production was 80



percent upon 1970. Only 2 per cent of the country is cultivable. The PDRY also pays substantial costs as a result of its international political options: western sources suggest that defence expenditure takes up around 20 per cent of total government outlays, and the armed forces draw off needed qualified personnel. Arab aid has been restricted, and subject to political conditions.

Given the political turmoil in the country and the lack of skilled personnel, it is hardly surprising that mistakes have been made. Many of these are now being blamed on the late President Salem Robea Ali, but the problem goes deeper than that. The 1969 bank nationalisation measure was in some ways disastrously executed – most of the accounts nationalised were overdrafts which had been granted by the international banks against deposits held in their other overseas branches. The 1972 housing nationalisation law had the immediate effect of cutting back the flow of workers' remittances. They sent money home to build houses and sustain their families, and since they technically qualified as 'absentee' they lost ownership of these houses until the law was appropriately amended. In addition, some of the projects involving foreign aid donors have been unsuccessful. A Bulgarian agricultural team, using a faulty survey prepared by a Lebanese firm, abandoned a major farming project in the Third Governorate after three years of operations. Many of the state farms were too hastily set up and made big losses. Yet the evidence available suggests that after a decade of extremely difficult economic problems, a small force of skilled and experienced personnel are now in place to make much better use of the PDRY's limited development possibilities. The administrative apparatus has grown with each of the central plans, and it is a reasonable expectation that the third plan, that of 1979–83, will have greater success than the two earlier ones.

## **Social Reforms**

Among the most striking post-revolutionary social processes is the attempt to abolish the influence of tribalism in South Yemeni life, in marked contrast to North Yemen, Oman and the other Peninsula states, where tribalism is being built



into the new state structures. This involves tackling institutional *and* ideological structures. Many of the tribal sheikhs have fled, and have had their lands confiscated. The main means of undermining the tribal system is not by banning its outward manifestations, but by creating a unified Yemeni nation. This involves in the first instance creating the material infrastructure of a nation: a unified economy, a road system, a national military structure. Less tangibly, it involves promoting a Yemeni culture through literature, dance, music and archaeology. This sense of a common Yemeni identity has an inward-looking aspect, uniting the fragments of South Yemen into a single country, but it also looks outwards toward North Yemen and the long-standing aim of reuniting all Yemenis within a single state. Yet the South Yemeni experience also points up the difficulties of altering attitudes and loyalties based on the tribe, even if the material bases and outward manifestations of tribal society have been altered. Indeed, it points to the need for a greater recognition that in post-revolutionary societies the transformation of political values, what can, in a revised materialist sense, be called 'political culture', is far more difficult and requires far more time than the transformation of political and social institutions.<sup>12</sup> All the major leadership disputes of the post-revolutionary period have involved, among other things, issues of nepotism and tribal loyalty, and there is no reason to suppose that this matter is simply a matter of the past. Indeed, it was in recognition of this fact, and of the need to be more open about the persistence of such loyalties, that in 1980 the People's Assembly re-introduced the tribal names for the local administrative units which had been replaced by numbered designations at the time of Independence.

A noticeable consequence of the revolution and, unwittingly, of the post-1967 economic crisis, has been greater income equality. After the salary and wage reductions of the 1968-72 period, fixed scales of remuneration have been introduced, with a ratio of around 1:3 for most payments. In 1977 the lowest wage for a worker in a factory was around YD 25 a month (exclusive of overtime), the highest YD 75. This applies in ministries too, although the ministers themselves get higher salaries, plus non-monetary privileges. Rent controls also contribute to income equality. Allowing for

variations in practice, official rents for flats in Aden range from YD 1.5 (\$4.35) to YD 5 (\$14.50) a month, the latter being for a three-room flat with bathroom. Although the price level in Aden rose by 77 per cent in the period 1970–5, rents fell by 25 per cent, despite enormous shortages of living space.

There has also been an almost total stamping out of corruption. In every economic enterprise and ministry there are special supervisory committees (*lejan al-reqaba*) whose job involves overseeing the finances and ensuring that no irregularities occur.<sup>13</sup> The contrast with the other countries of the Arabian Peninsula is striking. No one claims that individual corruption has ceased absolutely, but the greatest danger now lies not in one person taking money surreptitiously so much as in the emergence of a new privileged élite in the Party and state.

Great emphasis is laid on the expansion and distribution of educational services. The number of teachers has risen from 2485 in 1969 to 9277 in 1976; in the same period the number of pupils in primary and secondary education has risen from 60,000 to 288,000. Officially, 26 per cent of secondary-age children are in school and 77 per cent of primary, with a goal of 100 per cent in primary school by the mid-1980s. The present figures are respectively six and three times higher than in North Yemen,<sup>14</sup> and although possibly overstated they reflect a major advance. Aden has a small university with about 1300 students in 1975, and another 1230 studying abroad. The great failure of the educational programme is the adult literacy campaign. Despite official enthusiasm, government figures show that of the 736,000 people who enrolled in the 1973–6 period only 44,000 actually graduated. The campaign was modelled on the successful Cuban campaign of the early 1960s: but whereas in Cuba the literate *majority* could instruct the illiterate *minority*, the ratios were reversed in South Yemen. There were simply not enough teachers to go around, and Arabic script is much more difficult to learn than the Roman one used in Cuba. In addition, Cuba had a much higher population density, and over twice the level of urbanisation (60 per cent) found in South Yemen. The government is now rethinking the adult literacy campaign as a prelude to relaunching it.

Health has also been the target of a major effort. Life

expectancy at birth in 1970 was forty-two years. This was ten years lower than India; although comparable with that in North Yemen, the much higher level of urbanisation in the South should have somewhat improved health conditions. In 1967 the PDRY had twenty-nine doctors and nine hospitals, with only two of the latter functioning properly. In 1977, it had 250 doctors and twenty-six functioning hospitals. There are one health centre and ten medical units in each district (*mudiria*) of the country, for a total of twenty-two centres and 256 units. Since 1973, all medical services are free, and the target is one doctor per 2500 inhabitants by 1983. If this programme is completed it will distinguish the PDRY from most of the rest of the Middle East, where medical services are often costly and disproportionately concentrated in the urban centres. Already by 1977 the ratio of population to physician, although rather unfavourable (7510) was far better than that in the North (13,830).

Considerable efforts have been made to transform the position of women within the framework of the orthodox socialist programme for emancipating women.<sup>15</sup> This involves: (a) establishing legal equality between men and women; (b) strengthening the family and parenthood—the latter seen in economic as well as ideological terms, given the PDRY's shortage of labour; (c) encouraging women to participate in economic activity outside the home—again reflecting the need for more labour as well as a commitment to the equality of women and men. Under the 1974 Family Law, polygyny, child marriages and arranged marriages are prohibited. The conditions of divorce for men and women were made almost, but not completely, equal. A parallel erosion of traditional values can be seen in the town where the number of women wearing the *sheidor* has declined. The *sheidor* is, however, not in any way prohibited. The Ministry of Labour's campaign to increase the participation of women in the labour force through training and allocation policies yielded by the mid-1970s over 2000 women out of a total of 16,000 in industrial employment. During International Women's Year in 1975, special training institutes were established in each of the six Governorates and dozens of women were trained in jobs conventionally seen as exclusively men's, such as tractor driving, mechanics and accounting.

This process of emancipating women is only partially completed. Conservative opposition is strong: Saudi radio assailed the 1974 Family Law as contrary to the true practices of Islam. At least two of the six women's training institutes were closed as a result of traditionalist and local hostility to women in these institutes living away from home for up to nine months. Participation rates in education also vary noticeably between boys and girls: by official accounts, 38 per cent for girls in the 7–12 age group in 1975, as compared with 94 per cent for boys. While these problems reflect the resilience of traditional values, other problems derive from limitations within the official policy. As in more advanced post-capitalist societies, there is almost no concern with restructuring relations within the home; the result is that working women still face the full burden of domestic labour on top of their new extra-domestic jobs: the double shift. Moreover, the women's organisation is totally controlled by the Party, which is dominated by men, so the place of women in political life remains a very restricted one. Against this it must be emphasised that the PDRY has gone further than any other Peninsula society towards ensuring the equality of men and women.

The transformation of Yemeni society has involved a careful relationship with Islamic beliefs. Virtually all South Yemenis are Sunni Muslims (of the Shafei variety), and Islam is the official religion in the constitution. The mosques are open and used, and Muslim holidays are officially observed. On the *Eid* the President leads the prayers in the main mosque and Imams officiate at certain state functions, such as honouring the dead of the revolutionary struggle on Independence Day. At least one prominent Imam is a member of the Supreme People's Council. Yet Islam is not central in South Yemeni political life in the way it is in many other Arab countries. Islamic concepts were not prominent in the ideology of the nationalist movement against the British, and little use is made of Islamic themes or invocations in official statements. The latter are based, unequivocally, on 'scientific socialism', in implicit contrast with what is seen as the diluted and unscientific content of the various brands of 'Arab Socialism'. The Koran is taught in the schools – but by lay-teachers and as part of the normal curriculum, on the

basis of textbooks that stress what are presented as the egalitarian and anti-imperialist themes of Islamic doctrine. The Imams still perform their functions in the mosque itself, but they have lost their central forms of social power: education is secular; the *sharia* (the religious legal system) has been replaced by a new state-run legal code; and the religious endowment or *waqf* lands were confiscated in the 1970 land reform. The Imams now derive a salary from the Ministry of Justice and Waqfs to compensate for their loss of income through land reform. While it would be rash to assert that no opposition based on Islamic sentiment could emerge, it does appear that the régime has been careful to avoid provocative anti-religious positions.

No account of Yemeni life would be complete without mention of the narcotic *qat*, a leaf traditionally chewed by men in afternoon social gatherings. After many false starts, going back to the colonial times, a partial ban on *qat* consumption was finally imposed in 1975. Not only is it harmful to health, but it has very negative social effects – encouraging idleness and diverting family expenditure away from food. A good afternoon's chewing of moderately-priced *qat* involves, if you included the drinks normally taken with it, up to YD 2, or a day's wages. Now *qat* chewing is restricted to the weekend (Thursday afternoon and Friday) and casual observation in Aden indicates that public *qat* consumption has ceased completely on working days. The conviction of people involved in illegal *qat* trading is given prominent coverage in the press. But the ban on *qat* has had at least one unanticipated negative result: a rise in the demand for alcohol. Beer and whisky are available in Aden at least, and many who earlier sought solace and social company in the mastication of *qat* have simply transferred their dinars elsewhere.

## Political Transformation

Since 1967, South Yemen has been dominated by one political organisation, the National Liberation Front, with its two small and dependent allies, the Ba'ath and communist groupings. The construction of this new political system has involved the reorganisation of the state apparatus, and

the transformation of the Party from a loosely structured and radicalised nationalist front into a more orthodox centralised communist party.

At Independence, the NLF inherited a civil service and an army whose structure and orientation were stamped by colonialism. The civil service in Aden was an urban adjunct of the port and the British base, and the army was a tribally-recruited force for rural law enforcement. Many of the top civilian and military officials fled the country at Independence or soon after, and today there is limited personnel continuity within any section of the state apparatus between the pre- and post-Independence periods. All ministers are veterans of the guerrilla struggle, or are Party militants subsequently trained abroad. The state apparatus is very much under the control of the political leadership. Party functionaries are located at each level and play an active role. Civil service employment in 1977 numbered about 31,000 (more than double that at Independence) and, given the state's role in the economy, a majority of those in other employment were also under some degree of state influence.

The 'Defence of the Yemeni Revolution' does not just involve a strong and well-armed army along the country's extensive borders. Western estimates give a total of 21,000 in the military in 1978-9, with 19,000 of these in the army. In addition to the regular army the NLF has, since June 1973, developed a people's militia force based on the place of residence. The NLF has apparently firm control of these military units, and the army plays a rather less prominent role in public life than in other Arab countries. Yet in both the 1969 and 1978 crises one of the explosive issues was that of officer promotion and demotion, indicating that the factional disputes within the civilian political apparatuses find a continuing reflection inside the armed forces themselves.

A pervasive security consciousness has certainly become a much more marked facet of Yemeni life. The Yemenis aroused hostile criticism even among friendly Arab parties when in their 1975 State Security Law they made it illegal for any Yemeni to talk to a foreigner except on official business. 'Foreigner' means non-Yemeni, and the law was in fact especially aimed at other Arabs - Egyptians, Iraqis and Saudis - who were suspected of setting up, or attempting to

set up, client political groupings in the PDRY. It was also aimed at foreign aid missions suspected of recruiting spies (as in the case of one foreign advisor in Mukalla) or of encouraging prostitution. South Yemen's security measures have also provoked considerable criticism abroad: Amnesty International has attacked the PDRY's human rights stand. Yemeni officials concede that in the early years of the revolutionary régime violations and repression occurred, and Salem Robea Ali has been publicly blamed for many of these in the period since his fall. Officials insist that the PDRY is a country at war, and that many of those reported as being in jail or as having disappeared were killed in clashes with security forces along the border. They are also indignant at what they see as foreign silence on human rights violations in North Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Oman. The officials emphasise too that outside money can be used to bribe individuals in their impoverished country. It is not by chance that the 1975 anti-fraternisation law was passed a few months prior to the announcement of diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia in March 1976. While it may be impossible ever to establish the real record, it certainly seems to be the case both that major violations of socialist legality have occurred in the PDRY and that, at the same time, the extent of these violations has been greatly exaggerated by a 'black propaganda' campaign against that country. The number of political prisoners is, at most, a few hundred.

In October 1978, after a fifteen-year process, the NLF became the Yemeni Socialist Party. This process involved a 'double radicalisation'. In the first phase, from its establishment in October 1963 to June 1969, it was radicalised within the parameters of the Arab nationalist movement, from a loose Nasserite front to a more centralised organisation professing Marxism-Leninism, in part influenced by a similar and simultaneous ideological radicalisation within the Palestinian movement. Although Marxism-Leninism was prominent at the Third and Fourth NLF Congresses (October 1966 and March 1968), much of the Party apparatus remained in the hands of an opposing group led by Qahtan ash-Shaabi. The Marxist-Leninist faction came indisputably to power in June 1969. Yet this radicalisation left many questions unanswered: its Marxism-Leninism was rather inchoate,

borrowing ideas from the more utopian parts of Lenin, from Mao, and from Guevara. It lacked three essentials for being the ideological basis for a ruling Party: it had no coherent theories of Party organisation, or of social and economic development of South Yemen, and it was unclear about South Yemen's international alignment in circumstances where the country desperately needed foreign support in order to survive. Over the next nine years this radicalised nationalism was itself transformed into the 'scientific socialism' of the Yemeni Socialist Party. This second radicalisation led to the fall of a Party leader, this time President Salem Robea Ali.

The beginnings of this second radicalisation were evident at the Fifth Congress of the NLF in March 1972 when the Arab nationalist organisational structure of the 'General Command' was replaced by a Central Committee and a Political Bureau. The same Congress decided on the establishment of the militia and of the popular defence committees which were designed to combine educational and social welfare activities at the neighbourhood and block level with security surveillance duties. This second radicalisation was marked by greater political restraint, and the conference tone was more composed than that of the heady post-Independence Fourth Congress: there were fewer attacks on the petty bourgeoisie in the Arab world, less emphasis on the efficacy of armed struggle, and the phrase Marxism-Leninism was being gradually displaced by the less outspoken scientific socialism. At what was called the Unification Congress, in October 1975, the NLF went a stage further. It moved into a transitional phase, establishing the Unified Political Organisation of the NLF, incorporating the Vanguard Party, a Ba'ath grouping and the Popular Democratic Union, the Communist Party. Between October 1975 and October 1978 this Unified Political Organisation evolved into a new, formally constituted 'Vanguard Party', which became the Yemeni Socialist Party in October 1978.

The YSP now has a fully articulated organisational structure, very different from the nationalist NLF of the late 1960s. The controlling bodies are the Politburo with five full members, and the Central Committee of forty-seven full members.<sup>16</sup> Membership of the NLF stood in late 1977 at



around 26,000 including 1000 women, and around 2000 workers. No later figures are available. The Party's ideological school in Aden has trained over 3000 members since it was set up in 1973, and many cadres have been abroad for political training courses. Beyond the Party itself are the mass organisations: the largest, the General Union of Yemeni Workers, has 84,000 members; the Democratic Yemeni Youth 31,000; the General Union of Yemeni Women 15,000; and there are other student and young pioneer groups. Significantly, in the light of their weight in the population and the rural origins of the NLF; the peasants did not have an organisation until the mid-1970s. In May 1973, Popular Defence Committees, modelled on the Cuban system, were set up in the urban areas, but this project is believed to have not been successful: popular enthusiasm was low, and the security functions of the committees came to predominate. The media are also firmly under Party control. The most important publication is the party weekly *ath-Thawri* (The Revolutionary) with a circulation of 26,000. Some left-wing papers from other Arab countries, such as *al-Horria* and *al-Hadaf*, are on sale, and despite the political control of the media inside the country, there is no apparent restriction on listening to foreign radios: government officials openly quote the BBC or the Voice of America, and the radios in cafés also tune in to these stations, among others.

The highest legislative body is the Supreme People's Council, originally set up in 1971 with a nominated membership. In 1978 it was filled by direct elections for 111 seats and it elected a presidium (eleven members) and a Council of Ministers (nineteen members). At the provincial level, in a development modelled on the Cuban system of Poder Popular, People's Councils with limited financial and administrative powers were elected in each of the six Governorates in 1976 and 1977. Screening of candidates certainly occurs, but there is a plurality of candidates and out of 111 members, forty of the Supreme People's Council's members are not in the YSP.

By the end of 1978, the process of constructing a new set of political institutions for Party and state had been completed with the founding of the Congress of the YSP and the first elections to the SPC. Casual observation of the 1977 local

assembly elections in the First Governorate indicated that there was considerable enthusiasm – indeed pride – in the new electoral process. People pointed out that whereas under colonial rule there had been elections only in Aden, these elections were country-wide, that women voted for the first time, and that most of the candidates were of working-class background. Indeed, expectations may have gone beyond what the candidates can deliver: one member of the First Governorate Assembly remarked that his electors now regarded him 'like a British MP' and were 'besieging my home with requests for help with their problems, especially housing problems'.

Despite the democratic presentation of these new institutions, no one doubts that real power rests with the top leadership. The Party not only selects those candidates who stand in elections, but also controls the discussion in the various Councils. In the YSP itself there is limited room for debate; most discussions take place in private and informal circumstances.

The issue of what kind of Party to have – its internal structures, the relation between it and the people – lay at the centre of the dispute with President Salem Robea Ali. He was one of the leaders of the 1963–9 radicalisation, and President throughout the second phase. As early as 1972, divergent lines were clear. In July 1972, soon after the Fifth Congress, he launched his anti-bureaucratic campaign of urban 'uprisings', a form of mass mobilisation influenced by the Cultural Revolution in China, and designed to break the hold of the 'bureaucrats' in the Party and state. Later, he used his influence to restrict the unification of the NLF with what he regarded as the unrepresentative Vanguard and PDU groupings, and he criticised the new Party model for creating an élite structure. His opposition ranged across all three issues: Party structure, development programme, international alignment. Although hostile to the model of his opponents within the NLF leadership, he was unable to offer a coherent alternative.

The crisis between Salem Robea Ali and his opponents came to a head in June 1978. On 24 June the President of North Yemen was killed by a bomb sent to him disguised as a present from the South Yemeni government. The majority of

the NLF Central Committee accused Salem Robea Ali of having organised this, in the hope of provoking a crisis in the North in which he could intervene, and so oust his rivals in the South. On 26 June fighting broke out in Aden between units loyal to the President and forces backed by the Central Committee majority. By the end of the day Salem Robea Ali and his two leading associates had been captured and executed. Many issues contributed to this dénouement, but central to the dispute was the question of what kind of political structure to have. Salem Robea Ali favoured mass mobilisation, the promotion of politically militant at the expense of technically competent cadres, and an egalitarian life-style for Party cadres. His opponents argued that this approach was simply unworkable in South Yemen, where the material problems facing the régime were too great, and where the administrative incompetence, combined with nepotism, of the 'spontaneist' approach would lead to further catastrophes. In a small scale, this conflict reproduced the 'red' versus 'expert' dispute of the Chinese Revolution, and the debates in Cuba over Guevarist versus Soviet-style planning. Salem Robea Ali was, like Mao and Guevara, groping for an alternative, but the evidence is that he did not have one.

The defeat of Salem Robea Ali might have been expected to open a new period of orthodox Party consolidation within the YSP, which was established four months later. In fact, factional disputes continued to rage for the next two years. In 1979 the powerful head of the Ministry of State Security, Mohammed Said Abdullah, was dismissed and sent into exile in Ethiopia. Accused of being responsible for violations of legality, he was also involved in a growing conflict between YSP members from North and South Yemen: as a Northerner, he was blamed for many of the troubles which the country faced. Then, in April 1980, the powerful Secretary General of the YSP and President of the PDRY, Abdul Fatah Ismail, was dismissed and his place taken by the Prime Minister Ali Nasser Mohammad. The issues behind his fall were a mirror of those leading to the fall of Salem Robea Ali: Abdul Fatah was criticised for having been too loyal to the Soviet development model, and for relying too much on Soviet economic aid that was often deficient. He was also regarded as being too far removed from the concerns of the

masses to take appropriate initiatives. It would appear that although the USSR disapproved of the fall of Abdul Fatah they did respond to the April 1980 events by increasing their aid, and meeting some of the complaints which the Yemenis had voiced. Whether the disputes of 1978–80 will mark the end of this factionalism within the YSP or whether further conflicts will arise to weaken the Party and state leadership, remains to be seen. Based as they were on both personal issues, and substantial disagreements over policy, they showed that the transformation of the old nationalist grouping was still not complete.

## **International Dimensions**

From its inception, the PDRY has been involved in conflict with the other Arab states of the region: it has been the subject of attack by these states, which seek to undermine its social system, and it has itself encouraged revolutionary forces in these other countries. The key to South Yemeni foreign policy is its position on North Yemen: that Yemen—North and South—is one country (as much so as Vietnam, Korea and Germany, states divided by the conflict between capitalism and socialism, and as much so as Somalia or the Camerouns, colonial areas divided by rival imperialisms and only reunited at Independence). The division of Yemen is seen as a compound of both of these processes: first, the partition between Ottoman and British imperialisms in the nineteenth century, and second, the division between the revolutionary régime in the South and the right-wing capitalist régime, supported by Saudi Arabia, in the North. The régime in the North is seen as having usurped the revolution of 1962, and the tasks of reunification, which would involve fulfilling the programme of the 1962 revolution in the North, remain the overriding concern of the Southern leadership. A united Yemen would be economically viable in a way that the South on its own is not, and would, with a population close to 9 million, be the most populous state in the Arabian Peninsula. On two occasions since 1967, in 1972 and again in 1979, the two Yemens have been at war. Yet on both occasions these conflicts have given way to agreements on

step-by-step unification of the two countries. Full unity between the two is inconceivable before the two social systems are more comparable; but the dialectic of unity, oscillating between collaboration at the state level, and support for opposition forces in each other's domain, is the central concern of policy-maker in the PDRY.

Aden has supported the guerrillas in the neighbouring state of Oman, and has had only intermittently favourable relations with Saudi Arabia: successive Saudi attempts to wean the PDRY away from the USSR, and to force Aden to allow exiled merchants and landowners to return and repossess their property, have not succeeded. The PDRY's relations with the rest of the Arab world have been fraught – especially with Iraq, which has promoted its own Ba'athist followers in both Yemens against the NLF and its allies. The PDRY's major ally in the region has been Ethiopia: although favouring negotiation rather than a military solution in Eritrea, the South Yemenis have welcomed the advent of the Ethiopian revolution as a whole.

The international orientation of the PDRY has led it increasingly into a close alliance with the communist countries, and since the late 1960s it has enjoyed growing military, political and economic ties to the Soviet Union and its allies. Most military aid and equipment has come from the Soviet Union, and Soviet bloc countries participate in a wide range of development projects. The Cubans too play a significant role: they train the militia and the air force, and provide many doctors and educational experts. Thousands of Yemenis have been trained in eastern Europe and Cuba, and it is on the basis of this new generation of qualified personnel that the new structures of Party and state are being built up.

Despite a general alignment with the USSR, the PDRY has been careful to sustain its relations with China. The Chinese have built the largest factory in the PDRY (the textile plant at Mansura) and the 315-mile road linking Aden to Mukalla. There is a Chinese-staffed hospital in the Crater district of Aden, and at a day-to-day level Chinese technicians remain rather popular with the Yemeni population.

Faced with the threat of annihilation in the years since Independence, it is obvious enough why the PDRY has

opted for a general alignment with the communist world. The more interesting question is why the PDRY opted for the USSR rather than China, especially given the fact that in the late 1960s the Marxism-Leninism of the radical Arab nationalists was anti-revisionist in tone (i.e. anti-Russian) and tended to look to China for political inspiration.

The first reason is that the overriding aim of the PDRY government is survival: only the Soviet Union has the military power to guarantee that, both in providing arms and training, and in giving a general guarantee of support via its air and naval power. Second, the rightwards turn in Chinese foreign policy has, since the early 1970s, disillusioned many Yemenis. The turning-point was probably China's support for Sudan's President Numeiry in his July 1971 execution of Communist Party leaders, but Chinese recognition of Haile Selassie in 1970, the Shah in 1971 and Sultan Qabus in 1978 confirmed the shift. A third factor has been the influence of the small communist group in South Yemen itself, the PDU, which has in common with most other Arab communist parties an alignment with Moscow rather than Peking. Its gradual incorporation into the NLF has strengthened the links with the USSR. A fourth factor, and one not to be underestimated, is the relative inapplicability of the Chinese model to the PDRY: 'self-reliance' is not a feasible economic strategy, and in the absence of a long pre-history of revolutionary organisation before the advent of the organisation to power, the NLF has had to build up its cadres after Independence in a way that precludes ventures of the Cultural Revolution type. The failure of Salem Robea Ali's 'Maoist' initiatives has confirmed this trend.

If there is a criticism of the Soviet role, it is that Soviet non-military aid is *too small*, and that the USSR has not made clear a commitment to help transform the country economically, as it did in Cuba. There are some indications that since the establishment of the YSP, South Yemen has been allocated a somewhat higher ranking in Soviet foreign relations, and that since 1980 more economic aid has come as a result. But on the evidence so far, this is a just criticism. The Russians do not consider South Yemen to be a socialist country, merely 'a society of socialist orientation'. They

retain reservations about the political character of the YSP as well as doubting the feasibility of South Yemeni economic development.

## Conclusions

Any attempt to define the nature of the South Yemeni social formation encounters the problem of definition, the absence within Marxism of an agreed specification of what constitutes socialism. This is not the place to enter into that debate: suffice it to say that socialism will be treated here as a transitional stage between capitalism and communism, and in which two basic criteria are met: (a) that the major part of the means of production have been socialised; (b) that there exists a system of democracy at the level of the state and of the workplace. In other words, a combination of socio-economic and political conditions. In this light, it is clear that South Yemen is not a socialist country. Nor, indeed, does the YSP claim this: rather it states in its official documents that the PDRY is going through a national democratic phase of the revolution 'for the purpose of paving the way for the transition to the construction of socialism'.<sup>17</sup>

Although it is not yet socialist, it would be mistaken to see the PDRY as a capitalist country: elements of capitalism survive, as do, to a lesser extent, elements of pre-capitalist society, above all in the ideological realm. But the basic features of capitalist society, private ownership of the means of production and the possibility of private accumulation, do not *dominate* the South Yemeni economy, in practice or in law. In fact, industry, agriculture and foreign trade are all dominated by the state: 60 per cent of industrial output is by the state sector alone; all land is owned by the state, and service co-operatives are gradually giving way to producer ones; nearly all foreign trade is state-controlled. The private sector survives in a part of industry and agriculture, and in domestic trade. Of equal importance, however, is the fact that, in contrast to other experiences of 'Arab socialism', there is very little room for private accumulation, even in law: Party cadres have certain privileges, but they do not use these privileges or monies obtained through their position to

accumulate and acquire control of production. The new 1978 constitution specifies clearly that the state must play a leading role in the economy, dominating although not totally excluding private capital. Were the present process to lead to one in which private accumulation was taking place under the guise of state control, and this is a possibility in the future, then it would represent a definite reversal of the present trends, and an alteration of the real and legal conditions of ownership in South Yemeni society. One can, therefore, state that whilst South Yemen is not yet a socialist society, as far as the system of ownership is concerned, it has certainly ceased to be one in which the capitalist mode of production is dominant: it is a transitional formation, marked by features of both capitalism and socialism.

The second part of the definition of socialism concerns the exercise of deomocratic controls: this does not exist in South Yemen, nor, on the available evidence, would it be possible in a full sense. A greater degree of political democracy is certainly possible in the PDRY, but what the South Yemeni case underlines are the objective preconditions for such democracy to be implemented fully, where this is interpreted both in relation to the decisions of the workplace and in relation to the broader political concerns of the society. These would include a certain level of development of the productive forces, such that education and a degree of time for political activity were generalised;<sup>18</sup> the overcoming of pre-capitalist and capitalist ideological structures within the society; a degree of international security for the social formation in question; and a general commitment on the part of the mass of the population to the transition to socialism. For reasons both internal to South Yemeni society and related to the international and regional contexts in which it finds itself, none of these conditions is yet adequately satisfied. As in economics, so in politics: the transition to a higher form of organisation and society cannot be effected merely by an act of will, however great the degree of mobilisation. This transition involves objective preconditions, the realisation of which may lie outside the influence of the political forces involved. Yet such objective limits on democracy do not justify the denial of all democratic forms, they merely point to the difficulty of attaining socialism amidst such scarcity.



These objective constraints help to explain South Yemen's relationship to the Cuban model, why South Yemen both moved along that path, but has not proceeded anything like as far as Cuba. In both cases a radical nationalist tendency was converted into one that was socialist in intention as a result of the transformation of the revolution itself at home, and the conflict with counter-revolutionary forces outside. Both these cases involved the assimilation into the transformed Party of formerly separate, even hostile, urban-based communist groupings (the PDU, the PSP) and the establishment of closer relationships with the USSR. In both, an initial period of somewhat utopian experimentation in domestic and foreign policy led to serious reverses which had a jack-knife effect: having for some years scorned the policies advocated by Moscow, both régimes seemed to abandon their reserve and become almost too loyal imitators of the Soviet line. This reflected the longer-term failure of their radicalisms to produce an independent model. Such a process was associated with the departure from power of elements associated with the earlier, less orthodox, experimentations (Salem Robea Ali, Che Guevara). Both states suffered from the undermining of their social and economic development by the consumerist attractions of neighbouring countries – Miami in the case of Cuba, the oil states in the case of Yemen. Both had overgrown urban centres that went into severe decline when their international links were broken (Aden, Havana). Yet both managed to rally a measure of patriotic support, drawing on the long histories of struggle prior to the revolution in which the two régimes remained rooted. Above all, both demonstrated that possibility, under certain conditions, of making the transition from radical nationalism to a commitment to socialism, one quite distinct from the statist capitalism presented as a 'third way' or as 'socialism' in many other Third World countries. Yet the differences are also important: for all its problems Cuba is a far richer country than South Yemen – in 1978, per capita income at \$810 was twice that in South Yemen; it has a far higher level of literacy, technical personnel and mass consciousness; pre-capitalist ideological factors have virtually no role in Cuba, as opposed to South Yemen. Whatever the regional

problems of Cuba, these pale besides those to which South Yemen is exposed in the Arabian Peninsula.

What then are the conditions for South Yemen progressing further along the path towards a transition to socialism? Three at least can be specified: the first is the development of the national economy, with a corresponding increase in levels of health, education and political confidence. This depends partly on internal factors (such as the discovery of oil), and partly on the international aid which it receives. Secondly, it involves the growth of freer political norms inside South Yemen, both within the YSP and between the YSP and the population as a whole: this will not follow automatically from a development of the economy, since much higher levels of production are quite compatible with the absence of democratic norms, as is seen in eastern Europe. Indeed, the availability of Soviet economic aid, while favourable on one score, may well contribute to the reinforcement of centralised political control by the YSP leadership. Finally, progress towards socialism involves changes in the regional climate in which the PDRY finds itself, so that its general insecurity and the ideological pressure on its population are reduced and so that its ability to relate to other Third World states without relying so heavily on the USSR is expanded. The noteworthy achievements of the South Yemeni revolution should not obscure the great difficulties which it still confronts.

## Notes

- 1 This article is based on research conducted during three visits to South Yemen in 1970, 1973 and 1977. An earlier version was published in *MERIP Reports*, no. 8. My thanks are due to all those who read earlier versions and commented upon them – Perry Anderson, Helen Lockner, Maxine Moluneux and Robin Murray. For further details of the historical background to the South Yemeni revolution, see my *Arabia without Sultans*, Penguin, 1974, part three.
- 2 Details as follows: port 7555; building and construction 12,789; industrial undertakings 13,301; retails and wholesale trade 10,714; government, police and army 18,231; domestic service 17,000; others 1385. Source: M. S. Hassan, *Report to the People's Republic of Southern Yemen on Guidelines for Industrial Planning and Policy*, Aden, 1970, p. 6.

- 3 So restricted was the development of the productive forces that at Independence production only made up 40 per cent of GNP, services and British finance making up the rest. A striking illustration of the enclave could be seen in the hills west of Aden bay. At Bureika was the modern oil refinery which employed some local labour. Within five miles lay the fishing village of Fukhum, where the population lived, as they had done for millenia, in wattle huts.
- 4 The best available study of one part of the South Yemeni hinterland is Abdalla S. Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification: A Study of Political Change in a South Arabian Town*, Oxford, 1971. Bujra's study is of a town in the eastern, Hadramaut, region: we have no comparable study of the more densely populated western part of South Yemen, where the guerrilla movement was strongest.
- 5 The reason for this promotion of cotton in the late 1940s was the loss of Indian supplies following Independence, and the desire to guarantee supplies of cotton to Britain. A similar motive lay behind the much larger Gezira scheme in the Sudan.
- 6 The Imams of Yemen had ruled what is now North Yemen and much of the western part of South Yemen in the early eighteenth century, and there are strong common features in Yemeni life – in dialect, dress, eating habits, consumption of the narcotic *qat*, etc. The first modern nationalist movement was the liberal opposition to the Imams who fled to Aden in 1948 after a failed uprising. These Free Yemenis are the forefathers of the radical movement in both North and South.
- 7 From early 1963 onwards, the British were supplying arms and financial aid to the royalists in the North, and this was an added reason for Egypt to support an underground in the South. The Southern Yemenis were Muslims of the Shafei branch of Sunni Islam as were the inhabitants of southern and central North Yemen. The royalists tended to Zeidis, followers of a branch of Shiite Islam.
- 8 On the history of the MAN, see Walid Kazziha, *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World*, London, 1975.
- 9 Source: Ministry of Industry and Planning, Aden. This figure is much lower than the World Bank figure of 27,000. The discrepancy may be accounted for by the inclusion in the latter of additional artisanal labourers not included in the other figure.
- 10 *World Bank Study*, p. 5.
- 11 *New York Times*, 7 July 1980.
- 12 The concept of 'political culture' was originally developed within orthodox political science, where it had an idealist – a historical and unmateri- list – connotation. It is possible however to revise the concept, taking into account those historical and social factors which shape existing political values, and ascribing a less determinant role to them. The persistence of ethnic, tribal and sexual prejudices in post-revolutionary societies can be ascribed to the endurance of political cultures, understood in this revised sense.
- 13 Penalties for financial misdemeanors are heavy. In November 1977, a man convicted of embezzling YD 642 (under \$2000) from the Mukalla Hotel was sentenced for prison for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years, and banned from public employment for life (*Al-Sharara*, no. 267, 9 November 1977).

- 14 Comparable figures for North Yemen were 25 per cent and 3 per cent. *Source: World Development Report*, 1980, p. 154.
- 15 Maxine Molyneux, 'Women and Revolution in the PDRY', *Feminist Review*, no. 1. London, 1979; and *State Policies and the Position of Women Workers in the PDRY*, ILO, 1982.
- 16 *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, part 4, 16 October 1980.
- 17 *Constitution of the PDRY*, October 1978, Article 1.
- 18 As an antidote to the somewhat over-optimistic analysis of mass action prevalent on the Left, it is worth remembering Lenin's remark that 'an illiterate person is outside politics'. This may be too absolute a dismissal: illiterate people can certainly revolt, but the ability to construct a new society, let alone fulfil the economic and political preconditions for the transition to socialism, must be dependent on a generalised level of education.

## South Yemen: Country Profile

Official name:	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (named People's Republic of South Yemen from Independence on 30 November 1967 till 1969).
Population:	1.84 million (1979).
Capital:	Aden, 271,590 (1977).
Land area:	333,000 sq km, of which 0.7 per cent arable land, 27 per cent pastures and 7 per cent woodland and forest. Large areas are mountainous and desert terrain.
Official language:	Arabic.
Membership of international organisations:	UN, IMF, Arab League, Islamic League, CMEA (associate member).
Political structure	
Constitution:	Of October 1978 (supersedes that of 30 November 1970).
Highest legislative body:	People's Supreme Council (111 members).
Highest executive body:	Council of Ministers (nineteen members).
Head of state:	President Ali Nasser Muhammad, assumed office in April 1980.
Prime Minister:	Ali Nasser Muhammad, assumed office in August 1971.
Ruling Party:	The Yemen Socialist Party, constituted in October 1978.
Secretary General of the Party:	Ali Nasser Muhammad, assumed office in April 1980.
Party membership:	26,000 (c.3.5 per cent of the adult population, 1977).

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Armed forces:	23, 800 (c.5 per cent of total labour force, 1980), based on draft, plus a people's militia of up to 100,000 or c.12 per cent of the adult population.
Population	
Population density:	5.6 per sq km.
Population growth (%):	1.9 (1970-8).
Population of working age (15-64, %):	51 (1978).
Urban population (%):	37 (1980).
Ethnic groups:	Predominately Arab population, with small Indian and Somali minorities.
Education and health	
School system:	Twelve years of primary and secondary education free, but not universally available. Six years of universal primary education target for 1985.
Primary school enrolment <sup>i</sup> :	78 per cent of primary school-age children enrolled in 1976.
Secondary school enrolment <sup>ii</sup> :	19 per cent of secondary school-age children enrolled in 1976.
Higher education enrolment:	0.1 per cent (1976). <sup>c</sup>
Adult literacy (%):	27 (1978).
Life expectancy:	44 (1978).
Infant death rate (per 1000):	114 (1977).
Child death rate (per 1000):	31 (1977).
Population per hospital bed:	810 (1977).
Population per physician:	7095 (1977).
Access to safe water (% of population):	24 (1975). <sup>1a</sup>
Access to electricity (% of population):	22 total, 1.6 rural (1975). <sup>c</sup>
Economy	
GNP:	US\$ 770 million (1978).
GNP per capita:	US\$ 420 (1978).
Gross domestic investment as % of GDP:	41 (1977). <sup>c</sup>
State budget (expenditure) as % of GNP:	50 (1977). <sup>c</sup>
Defence expenditure—	(1977). <sup>c</sup>
% of total state budget:	19.
% of GNP	9.5.
GDP by sector (%):	Agriculture 13, fisheries 9, industry 19, (manufacturing 8), services 59 <sup>iii</sup> (1976).
Total labour force:	476,000 (1979). c.25 per cent were working abroad in 1976. <sup>c</sup>

by sector (%):	Agriculture and fishery 60, industry 21, services 19 (1978).
Structure of ownership:	<i>Industry</i> : partly nationalised with state-owned enterprises representing c.60 per cent of output value (1980); the remaining units are under either private or mixed (with 51 per cent of shares owned by the state) ownership. <i>Agriculture</i> : All land nationalised. Co-operatives <sup>iv</sup> cover 70 per cent of the cultivated area, state farms c.10 per cent (1980). Livestock, (the bulk of which is produced by Bedouins) is mainly privately owned. <i>Fishing</i> : (by gross value, 1976): co-operatives 26 per cent, joint ventures 9 per cent, state-owned enterprises 16 per cent, foreign ownership 49 per cent. <sup>c</sup>
Land tenure:	The 1970 Land Reform limited irrigated holdings to 20 acres (8.1 ha) and unirrigated holdings to 40 acres (16.3 ha).
Main crops:	Wheat, cotton.
Irrigated area:	56,000 ha or 25 per cent of arable land (75 per cent of land used for crops).
Food self-sufficiency:	60–5 per cent (1977).
Energy balance –	(1978).
commercial consumption	
per capita:	523 kg coal equivalent.
liquid fuels (%):	100.
net imports (%):	114.
Growth indicators (% p.a.) <sup>c</sup> –	
GDP:	c.7 (1973–7).
GDP per capita:	c.5 (1973–7).
manufacturing industry:	7 (1969–76).
refining:	– 13 (1969–76).
agriculture:	2 (1973–6).
fisheries:	6.5 (1973–6).
food production per capita:	0.6 (1969/71–9). <sup>6</sup>

#### Foreign trade and economic integration

Main source of foreign exchange:	(1978). <sup>9</sup>	
	US\$ m.	% of GNP
Workers' remittances	256	35
foreign aid (loans and grants):	123	17
exports (goods):	39	5
oil refining:	13 <sup>vi</sup>	
Imports (goods):	367 <sup>9</sup>	50

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Main exports:	Fish 37 per cent, petroleum 37 per cent, cotton 8 per cent, coffee 8 per cent (1977). <sup>c</sup>
Main imports:	Machinery and transport equipment 35 per cent, food 23 per cent, petroleum 18 per cent (1977). <sup>c</sup>
Main trading partners: <sup>vii</sup>	Japan, the UK, the USSR, Italy (1975–7). <sup>c</sup>
Destination of exports (%):	Industrialised countries 35, developing countries 51, socialist countries 10, capital surplus oil exporters 4 (1978).
Foreign debt – as % of GNP: by creditors (%): <sup>viii</sup>	US\$ 349 million (1978). <sup>c</sup> 47.5. Arab governments and funds 42, the USSR 23, China 14, IDA 9, other largely socialist 13 (1977). <sup>c</sup>
Debt services ratio (%):	1.7 (1978). <sup>18</sup>
Foreign aid:	43 per cent of total state budget in 1977. Total disbursed 1969–77: US\$ 250 million in medium-and long-term loans ( $\frac{2}{3}$ from socialist countries), US\$ 113 million in grants (mostly from Arab countries). <sup>c</sup>
Foreign investment:	The 1978 constitution allows foreign investment under certain conditions. So far, some joint ventures have been initiated in fishing and oil exploration.

### *Sources*

<sup>a</sup>Fred Halliday, *Arabia without Sultans*, part III, London, 1974.

<sup>b</sup>Richard Nyrop, *Area Handbook for the Yemens*, Washington DC, 1977.

<sup>c</sup>World Bank, *People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. A review of Economic and Social Development*, Washington DC, 1979.

<sup>d</sup>Robert Stookey, *South Yemen*, London 1982.

<sup>e</sup>Moshe Efrat, 'The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen: Scientific Socialism on Trial in an Arab Country', in Peter Wiles ed. *The New Communist Third World*, London 1982.

### *Notes*

<sup>i</sup>See text. Gross ratios (1977, %): 77; males 100, females 54.

<sup>ii</sup>See text. Gross ratios (1977, %): 26.

<sup>iii</sup>Services include port activities.

<sup>iv</sup>With co-operative management of services or production.

<sup>v</sup>Calculated from data in source c.

<sup>vi</sup>1977.

<sup>vii</sup>Non-petroleum trade only.

<sup>viii</sup>Disbursed and undisbursed.

## **South Yemen: Chronology**

- 1839 Britain occupies the port of Aden.  
1869 Opening of the Suez Canal.  
First decades of the twentieth century: extension of the Protectorate system into the hinterland.  
1948 Emergence of the first Yemeni nationalist movement in North Yemen.  
1950–2 Adeni nationalists call for self-rule in Aden itself.  
1956 Founding of the Aden Trades Union Congress; pro-Egyptian, it organises a series of strikes.  
1959–63 Establishment of the Federation of South Arabia.  
1962 Revolution and civil war in North Yemen; intervention of Egyptian troops; formation of people's Socialist Party by Aden trades unions.  
1963 Establishment of the National Liberation Front (NLF) of South Yemen, and start of a guerrilla war in the South Yemeni hinterland.  
1965 First Congress of the NLF in North Yemen; guerrilla war in Aden.  
1966 PSP and other organisations form FLOSY, Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen, with Egyptian backing.  
1967 Withdrawal of British forces from the hinterland; civil war between NLF and FLOSY; British hand over power to the NLF on 30 November.  
1968 March: Fourth Congress of NLF, followed by evictions of the Left; first land reform.  
1969 June: Left returns to power; October: Aden breaks relations with the USA; November: nationalisation of all banks and insurance companies.  
1970 Second land reform.  
1971–4 First three-year plan; 1971 free port status of Aden abolished.  
1972 All rented property nationalised; Fifth Congress of the NLF establishes militia and People's Defence Committees; September: first border war with North Yemen, followed by Tripoli agreement on unity.  
1974 Family Law; First Congress of the General Union of Yemeni Women; emigration banned.  
1975–8 Second five-year plan.  
1975 October: Unification of NLF, People's Democratic Union and Vanguard Party into United Political Organisation of the National Front.  
1976 Establishment of diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia.  
1977 May: government takeover of BP refinery, by agreement.  
1978 June: government crisis, execution of President Salem Robea Ali; October: founding Congress of Yemeni Socialist Party.  
1979–83 Second five-year plan.



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- 1979 February: second war with North Yemen; Kuwait unity agreement.
- 20 November 1979 Year Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with USSR.
- 1980 April: Abdul Fateh Ishmail replaced as President and Secretary-General by Ali Nasser Mohammad. Discovery of oil reported.
- October 1980 Extraordinary Congress of YSP. New Politburo and CC.
- February 1981 Execution of Saleh Mohammad Motieh, former Foreign Minister and Politburo member, charged with spying for Saudi Arabia.

# MOZAMBIQUE—LATE COLONIALISM AND EARLY PROBLEMS OF TRANSITION

David Wield

## Introduction

This chapter first describes the social and economic changes which occurred during the colonial period. Portuguese colonialism left Mozambique with a particularly backward and distorted economy; and Portuguese capital was one of the weakest in Europe and depended on coercion to a greater extent and for longer than other colonial powers. For example, a system of forced labour was widespread in Mozambique until the mid-1960s. In the second section, I discuss the process of anti-colonial struggle, notably the formation and development of the only serious Nationalist party, Frelimo, and its radicalisation during the 1960s. The next two sections discuss the crisis in the colonial political economy between 1974 and 1976, and between 1976 and 1981.<sup>1</sup> Since it is impossible to be comprehensive, some important theoretical and empirical themes have been omitted, or considered only briefly.<sup>2</sup> I have, however, tried to cover some important theoretical themes: people's power and post-Independence democratic institutions; the social relations in industry and agriculture; the question of planning and the balance industry-agriculture; the relationship between the Party and state; as well as to include considerable descriptive detail.

## The Colonial Background

Historically, the colonial domination of Mozambique can be split into three periods: (a) until the second world war, (b) 1945 to the early 1960s, and (c) 1960 to 1974. During each of these periods the particularity of Mozambique (and of Angola) lies in the fact that the level of Portuguese capital